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The Rescue of Prince Hal

BY
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**ELDRIDGE ENTERTAINMENT HOUSE,
FRANKLIN, - OHIO.**

To my believing friend, Professor Maurice Ricker, of Des Moines, Iowa, the first rescuer of my budding dramatic ambitions. My greeting across the years between, dear old Comrade!

THE PEOPLE OF THE COMEDY

Mr. Sydney Parker, Nominal Head of the House,
Who has builded his house on Easy Street.

Mrs. Sydney Parker, Reigning Head of the House,
Who has Serious Social Ambitions.

Louise Parker, Their Daughter,
Whose desires can mostly be Satisfied by Money.

Wellington Parker, Their Son,
A Successful Financier in the Making.

Harry Henderson Hess, A Vagrant Nephew,
Who is Going to School on the Side.

Mrs. Katherine Colvin, Their Richest Aunt,
Who contemplates giving away her Money before she Dies.

Mr. Andrew Martin, an Elderly Uncle,
Who Views with Alarm the Family's growing Social Prestige.

Madeline Tracey, of New York City,
Who is quite Approachable, in spite of Her Clothes.

Emma, a Ridiculously Pretty Housemaid.

SYNOPSIS

Act I. *The Sittingroom of the Parker Home, one Monday Morning in February.*

"I am Under-Secretary to the House of Parker.
'Keep off the Grass!' "

Act II. *The Parlor of the Parker Home, at 6 o'clock, the Evening of the Same Day.*

"Fact is, Kate, I'm on Easy Street at last."

Act III. *The Sittingroom of the Parker Home, after breakfast, Tuesday Morning.*

"You can't wash the gold off your fingers. It sticks—it sticks!"

Epilogue. *The Diningroom of the Parker Home, Wednesday Morning, at 9 o'clock.*

"I'm to help her do things,—things that count, you know, and keep on counting after you're dead."

ACT I

(The Sitting room of the Parker Home, an apartment of careless elegance, one Monday Morning in February. Mrs. Sydney Parker, in a beautiful morning dress, is seated at her writing-desk, looking over bills and letters.)

Mrs. P. Mrs. Myers's luncheon on Thursday; at last that much-talked-of luncheon! I hope she won't wear that everlasting purple cloth! I'm sick and tired of seeing it! The Reynoldes dinner on Monday, and the Clarkson wedding on Tuesday. *(writing in a little book)*. The musicale Thursday—no, Tuesday, at eleven. I ought to have a new gown for the wedding; I've worn that rose silk three times this winter. It will soon be as famous as Mrs. Myers's purple cloth. . . . Hal's report for January. 72 in geometry. Poor boy, he gets worse every day. *(drops it into the waste basket)*. And he failed in Latin last term! *(takes up a letter)*. "Mrs. W. Winnifred Williams requests the honor of your presence at the wedding of her daughter—" *(tosses it into the basket)*. That was ages ago! They're now in the first stages of absolute divorce,—that's how long ago it was! *(takes up another letter)*.

(Enter EMMA, who skirmishes around briskly, looking for something.)

Mrs. P. *(without looking up)*. Has Hal gone to school? What time is it?

Emma. It's half-past nine. No, Ma'am, he has n't. He can't find his Latin books.

Mrs. P. *(tossing a letter into the basket, and taking up another)*. No, I suppose not. He never can. The last thing that boy thinks about is his school work.

Emma. *(demurely)*. Yes, Ma'am. *(She goes to the bookcase, and opens it.)*

Mrs. P. (*without looking up*). What are you looking for?

Emma. Harry's books.

Mrs. P. Where is he?

Emma. He has n't gone to school yet.

Mrs. P. (*looking up*). So you said before. What's he doing?

Emma. (*with reluctance*). Eating his breakfast.

Mrs. P. (*dropping the letter she holds, from surprise*). He is? He is? Does he often breakfast at half-past nine?

Emma. No, Ma'am, not often; that is, not so very often. (*She takes two books from the case, and closes the door.*)

Mrs. P. Did he yesterday? (*Emma nods, reluctantly*). And the day before? (*Emma nods.*) Well, go on about your work. If those are Hal's books, put them on the table, and leave them there. (*Emma does so, and leaves the room. Mrs. Parker sighs, and resumes her occupation, albeit with deep depression.*)

(*Enter MR. ANDREW MARTIN.*)

Mr. M. Sydney said he left some papers here for me. Do you know anything about them?

Mrs. P. No, he did n't say anything about any papers.

Mr. M. (*going to the table*). They are n't here. Maybe he told Hal to bring them down. He wants them this morning.

Mrs. P. (*leaning back, pen in hand*). Perhaps; you'll have to ask Hal. Do you know, I'm afraid we'll have to send Hal away to school? He's failed in Latin again.

Mr. M. (*taking up one of the books that Emma placed on the table*). Failing in Latin is one of his favorite diversions. (*smiling*). He's breakfasting now.

Mrs. P. He has everything a boy can want. I'm sure we do all we can for him.

Mr. M. (*looking through the book smilingly*). My dear sister, you do too much. That's the trouble. He's

suffering from sheer surfeit. It is not only not best for man to be alone, but it is not best for man to have everything he wants. Besides, this house is no place for a boy with brains.

Mrs. P. (highly indignant). Do you consider it an ideal place for a boy *without* brains?

Mr. M. (still smiling into the book he is running through). Not necessarily. I have never considered it in the light of an asylum. I mean Hal is a chameleon; he takes color from his surroundings. Most clever people do. I believe it used to be called "the artistic temperament."

Mrs. P. But what will become of him?

Mr. M. (shrugging his shoulders,—a common trick of his). What becomes of other clever boys, spoiled in the same way? He'll become a clubman, in all likelihood, and die suddenly, prematurely gray.

Mrs. P. (frowning). "Prematurely gray." What do you mean?

Mr. M. Prematurely gray. It is not uncommon in clubmen.

Mrs. P. Sydney has been talking of sending him to Annapolis. What do you think?

Mr. M. (walking toward the door). The Navy is eminently respectable. He'll probably be as comfortable there as a man of ability can be in ready-made clothes, moral, social, and otherwise.

Mrs. P. "Ready-made clothes?" Why, Andrew, what an expression! I don't see what clothes have to do with Hal's entering the Navy.

Mr. M. (turning at the door). Yes, it is seemingly a far cry from ready-made clothes to an officer of the U. S. Navy,—or any other Navy. Nevertheless, the connection is vital. *(He goes out, smiling inscrutably.)*

Mrs. P. I don't think Andrew knows what he means himself, half the time.

(Enter EMMA, with the morning mail.)

Emma. The mail, Mrs. Parker. (*She hands it, then waits.*)

Mrs. P. (*running over the letters*). Tell Miss Louise that I wish to see her. (*Emma goes. Mrs. Parker, using a paperknife with neat dispatch, opens several envelopes.*) Kirkwood's bill. I hope he got it here in time. Thirty-five dollars! It ought to be about fifteen! We had nothing but carnations and sweet peas. Bills, bills, bills! And it's only the middle of the month! This looks like Aunt Kate. She always uses these ridiculous square envelopes. (*opens a letter and reads aloud*). "The Knickerbocker, February 19th. My dearest Mary." Aunt Kate! Well, I'll declare! (*She scans the whole letter hastily.*) She's been in New York a week, and she's dead tired, and she'll be here tonight. Tonight! Heavens, how things happen!

(*Enter LOUISE PARKER, in a fetching morning gown.*)

Louise. Emma says you want to see me. Has Hal gone yet? I want him to stop at Wanamaker's for me.

Mrs. P. What for? It is time he was at school.

Louise. I've 'phoned three times for them to come for that suit. I want it for Thursday sure. Hal can take it on his way down. (*She seats herself, and reaches for the letters*). Anything for me?

Mrs. P. You'd better 'phone for a messenger, and leave Hal go on. He's frightfully late now. Well, guess the latest.

Louise. Here's a letter from Madeline. What is the latest?

Mrs. P. (*rising, with a tragic gesture*). Your Aunt Kate's in America!

Louise. (*looking up from her letter*). Aunt Kate? Aunt Kate Colvin? I thought she was in Egypt!

Mrs. P. She's never where you think she is. She was in Egypt, and she was in Rome, and now she's in New York. She could n't pounce down upon us at a worse time, if she had sat up nights thinking about it.

What does Madeline say? Did you invite her for any special time?

Louise. Yes, for this week. She'll be here Wednesday, she says.

Mrs. P. (*beginning to move about the room, restlessly*). She can't come. Telegraph her to stay away. Your Aunt Kate's coming tonight.

Louise. My Aunt Kate? Tonight!

Mrs. P. Don't repeat things like a parrot! It's enough to drive one crazy!

Louise. And our dinner on Wednesday!

Mrs. P. (*calmly*). And our dinner on Wednesday.

Louise. Write her you are sick.

Mrs. P. What good would it do? Your relations are always charmed to put up with anything—everything; it's the privilege of being in the family. You can head off your friends, and side-track your enemies, but you can't stop your relations! If you write them you are away, they'll come and wait for you; if you write 'em you're sick, they'll come to nurse you; if you write 'em you're in jail, they'll come to get you out; if you write 'em you're dead, they'll come to—to bury you!

Louise. (*dejectedly*). That's so.

Mrs. P. She wants to see all of us in our own home, she says. She's been suddenly smitten with a longing for home ties. Listen; this is what she says: "We had a fairly pleasant—" No, that is n't it. Here it is. "I feel very lonely at times, so far from mine own people. I'm tired gadding around the world by myself. I'd like to nestle down in some cozy home nook, and rest, rest, rest!"

Louise. Fancy Aunt Kate "nestling!"

Mrs. P. I can't. She never did; she sat up straight in her cradle.

Louise. (*giggling*). I would n't call this "A cozy home nook."

Mrs. P. (*looking around the room slowly*). No,

either would I. But she does n't imagine how things are with us, of course. She has n't visited us since you were a little girl. Your father was only a Director then.

Louise. (sighing). Yes, times have changed with us. But I was n't very little; I was in the high school. Don't you remember, it was when we lived in German-town, and were poor but hopeful. That letter sounds as if she would stay a year.

Mrs. P. (straightening a rug). Oh, she won't. I know Kate Colvin. She never stayed in one place six weeks in her life. She'll probably stay two days and a half.

(Enter HARRY HENDERSON HESS, hastily and noisily. He carries some school books, a legal-looking bundle of papers, and a long dangling strap.)

Hal. Say, Aunt Mary, do you know where—why, what's the matter? Anybody just died?

Mrs. P. Take off your cap, Hal, and lower your voice. I presume you are hunting your Latin books. There they are, on the table. Why are n't you at school?

Hal. (jerking off his cap, and going to the bookcase). Could n't find my geometry, so could n't get my lesson, so I cut the push. I got to stop at the office with these papers for Uncle Syd. I have n't time to go to school. I am a man of affairs. *(digs around in the bookcase anxiously).* I believe somebody hides my books, just to blast my career!

Louise. (laughing). You poor boy! What have you lost?

Hal. (going to the divan, and shaking out the cushions). What have you lost? You people look as if Dolly Dimple had broken all the cut glass in the house. What's the row? Put me next.

Mrs. P. Hal, you must *not* call Emma "Dolly Dimple." It is ridiculous.

Hal. The matter is respectfully referred to the Com-

mittee on Home Affairs. What's the row, I say? Put me next.

Louise. (*smiling*). Your Aunt Kate is coming to see us.

Hal. (*discovering his geometry on the divan*). Saved again!—My Aunt Kate. She's a new one on me.

Mrs. P. You've heard of your Aunt Kate Colvin,—the one that goes to Europe so often.

Hal. (*readjusting the cushions on the divan*). Oh, Aunt Kate Colvin! Gee Whizz, she's that rich old party!

Mrs. P. (*with a sigh*). Yes, she's "that rich old party."

Louise. (*pensively*). They say she's worth a million.

Hal. (*transfixed*). A million! Oh my eyes! Is her health good?

Mrs. P. You've seen your Aunt Kate, have n't you?

Hal. (*strapping up his books as he talks*). I think I did, once, long before my mother died. She brought me a "Pilgrim's Progress." I remember the picture of the man on the cover. He had a big bundle on his back, and I thought his wife was a washerwoman. Oh, yes, I remember her all right; handsome, stately, First Family sort. Walks this way. (*illustrates*). All one piece; no goods exchanged. My Aunt Kate! Well, I should say yes! It seemeth but yesterday that she gave me that fine old English classic, when my soul yearned for a popgun.

Louise. Aunt Kate always gives books. She gave me a "Pilgrim's Progress."

Hal. With the washerwoman's husband on the cover?

Louise. Yes, the bundle tied with gold rope,—a frightfully big bundle!

Hal. The same, the same. Highly cultured old party.

Mrs. P. (*gathering up some letters, and going toward the door*). Aunt Kate is n't old. She's younger than your Aunt Sally, and she's not forty-five. (*to*

Louise). I'm going to 'phone your father; he'll want to know right off. (*goes*).

Hal. (*taking up his books and the legal-looking package*). The age statistics of women are always relative. No woman is ever just plain forty; she is younger than Mrs. Thingumbob, who isn't forty-five. Oh woman, lovely woman, your arithmetic is all your own. Well, so long.

Louise. Hal, sit down a minute. I want to tell you about Aunt Kate.

Hal. (*at the door*). Well, hurry up. I'm running on schedule this morning.

Louise. Sit down, take off your cap, and stop thinking of something else.

Hal. (*sitting down, his cap a-tilt*). I shall have to think of something else until you give me something else to think about. Say on. I perceive that we have something here of serious import.

Louise. It's pretty serious, and you must help us out. Your Aunt Kate is coming here tonight.

Hal. (*taking out his notebook, with scholarly precision*). My Aunt Kitty Colvin, proud possessor of one million plunks, is coming here tonight. Fact one. I have it. Go on, and go slow. I do not think easily in large figures.

Louise. She'll be here in time for dinner, and we don't know how long she'll stay.

Hal. (*writing*). Ah, that is unfortunate.

Louise. It is. Now listen. Aunt Kate is worth a million, they say, and—

Hal. (*waving the notebook*). Young woman, do you think I have forgotten the fact? That is the sort of thing a man *never* forgets—at least not in a world built on the order of *this* one!

Louise. Listen. I'm talking. Aunt Kate hates society; she thinks it is a dreadful waste of time, and only foolish people waste time.

Hal. The plot thickens. What is her long suit?

Louise. (*with a groan*). Culture. Intellectual Attainment. And Human Welfare. And Women—the Uplift of Women. Just now she is interested in the women of Egypt.

Hal. (*with a long whistle*). The women of Egypt! Now would n't that jar you? What's the matter with 'em?

Louise. (*giggling*). I don't know. I suppose they want to vote, or something outlandish. But this is the point. She won't be here long, and while she's here, we're going to—to—

Hal. (*with a profound wink*). Lower the pressure.

Louise. (*nodding*). Well, just a little. She has n't visited us since Papa was made President, you know, and since then we—we have—er—

Hal. We have been going some. I see.

Louise. Yes, and we don't want to—to shock her, as it were. And she might as well give her money to us as to the women of Egypt. Most likely they are a good deal happier as they are. What do people want with an education over there? It will only make them miserable to tell them about things they have n't got. And we are n't rich; now are we, Hal?

Hal. (*throwing up his hands*). The Heavens forbid! I have n't a sou. That's the truth if I ever told it.

Louise. (*pensively*). Of course we are n't going to lie about our position, but—

Hal. Of course not. Like limburger, it speaks for itself.

Louise. (*gravely*). It speaks for itself, but—well, I'm sure poor Papa works like a dog, and I need a party gown this minute.

Hal. (*slamming his notebook shut, and buttoning his coat over it with a determined air*). I see. I see. My fair and ingenuous cousin, I have the situation by the throat—by the hair of its head, so to speak. Aunt Kate

is rich; we are not; we are suffering for party gowns, automobiles, false hair, and other necessities. In case of apoplexy, we would fain be in on the ground floor. Is n't that about the situation?

Louise. (giggling). Oh Hal, your slang is perfectly disgraceful! People don't have to die before they give their money away. I don't want Aunt Kate to die. I'm awfully fond of her. We all are. But she says she's going to divide her money among her relations while she can enjoy seeing them enjoy it,—she's always talking about doing that. But if she thinks we have enough, she'll give it to somebody who has n't.

Hal. (chewing his pencil absently). Well, there are a good many poor ramifications; she could do worse than tidy them up a bit, don't you think?

Louise. (carelessly). Oh, I suppose she'll help them when they need it. But I want my share now. When I'm old I suppose I'll have heaps of money.

Hal. Oh, no doubt. All old people do. I've noticed that.

Louise. She won't stay long—only a few days, and if we can impress her with our culture and our domestic—domestis—

Hal. Permit me. Domesticity. (*springing up*). "Conspiracy, thou art afoot, take thou what course thou wilt!" What's the game,—Poverty Poor, Land Poor, Genteel Poor, or Swell Poor?

(*Enter MRS. PARKER.*)

Mrs. P. I've 'phoned your father. He and Wellington will meet your Aunt Kate,—stop at the station as they come home, you know. He is delighted. (*She seats herself at her desk, and sorts out some cards and envelopes.*)

Louise. Oh, Papa adores her. She's the only sister that does n't nag him.

Mrs. P. (sharply). She has n't been within nagging distance for years.

Hal. (starting for school again). I'll miss that Virgil

exam if I don't make tracks. (*to Louise, who has risen from her chair*). Then it's Swell Poor?

Mrs. P. Who's swell poor?

Hal. We are.

Mrs. P. We are poor enough, Heaven knows. Poverty is not what you have, but what you have to spend.

Louise. (*sighing*). You can't spend what you have n't got.

Mrs. P. (*also sighing*). No, but you can need a good deal more than you can spend.

Hal. You people talk like Bartlett's "Familiar Quotations." Well, is it Swell Poor, I said?

Louise. It's Cultured Rich, I guess. That's rare enough to attract even Aunt Kate. (*starts out*). Oh Hal, I want you to stop at Wanamaker's for me, will you? I just got to have my green suit for Thursday.

Hal. Have n't time; got a Virgil quiz at eleven.

Louise. Please, dear. I'll give you a five pound Huyler's, if you will.

Mrs. P. Louise, I thought I told you to 'phone for a messenger? All these errands distract Hal's attention from his studies. It must be stopped; that's all there is about it.

Louise. Just this once, please, Mamma. Please. Hal does n't mind.

Hal. (*ruefully*). Yes, get the box, or the trunk, or whatever it is. "I'll try, Sir," said the Captain." Only—don't make a fuss the next time I flunk in Latin.

Louise. I'll get the box right off. You're a dear boy. I knew you would n't mind.—Mamma, I'm going to write Madeline not to come until later.

Mrs. P. (*putting the cards into the envelopes*). Yes, tell her—tell her we have the small pox! (*Louise goes.*)

Hal. Madeline Tracey! Head her off by all means! Her clothes would queer the whole deal! (*He leans against the back of a chair, waiting.*)

Mrs. P. I am distracted about these invitations.

Hal. (absently, as one thinking of something else). A missionary tea for Aunt Kate?

Mrs. P. No, that bridge luncheon Saturday. I hope Aunt Kate will be gone by that time. She hates bridge. I have n't had time to address them. (*Hal whistles softly, swinging his books by their long strap, and looking down.*) Say, dear, are you in a dreadful hurry?..... Hal, are you in a dreadful hurry?

Hal. (rousing himself, for his reverie has been a long one—for a boy!). No, Aunt Mary. It's never late till it's early. What 'tis?

Mrs. P. Would you mind addressing these envelopes before you go? There are only fifty, and I am due at the dressmaker's at eleven.

Hal. (putting down his books and the legal-looking package quietly). Yes, indeed.

Mrs. P. (rising). Here's the list, and they are all ready. (*She starts to leave the room, then, going to him, she places her hands on his shoulders.*) Prince Hal, while Aunt Kate is here I'm going to depend upon you more than all the rest together.

Hal. (earnestly). Aunt Mary, I'm your huckleberry. Cultured Rich is the game. We are rich, but not so rich that you'd notice it. We still need things. I am the Impecunious Nephew, and poor old Uncle Syd works like a cart horse. You need diamonds, Louise needs dinner gowns, the Duke needs spuds, Uncle Andy needs rest, and I need—Opportunity. We all need things. Is that right?

Mrs. P. (laughing). No hardly. At least, we all need things, but we must n't let on that we do. Aunt Kate can see through a brick wall.

Hal. (with complete understanding). But we must n't let it fall on her. (*Louise comes in with a long paste-board box, which she places on a chair and goes out.*)

Mrs. P. We must n't let it fall on her. She won't be here long, and we'll go in for Culture. See? That's the road to Aunt Kate's heart. We do not care about a good

time; we realize that society is a foolish waste of time and money. Talk about your studies.

Hal. (grinning). Latin and geometry?

Mrs. P. Anything to build up a Culture Atmosphere. Don't use slang and *don't* talk about motor cars. (*She releases him, and turns to go.*)

Hal. And I'll bone up on Egypt; the pyramids, and Antony and Cleopatra, and all that push. No woman puts her trust in me in vain. (*Mrs. Parker smiles, and goes out. Hal places his book and the packet on the box Louise has brought in, and sits down at the writing desk, where he begins to address envelopes with speed and dexterity.*) Darn this pen! It's a wise woman that knows a pen from a cambric needle!

(*Enter MR. MARTIN, with the paper.*)

Mr. M. Oh, are you here? Did your uncle say anything about some papers he wanted at the office?

Hal. (dashing off envelopes at a terrific speed). Yes. I got 'em. I'll take them on my way to school.

Mr. M. (seating himself by the table, and speaking with leisurely sarcasm). Oh, then you are going to school today? (*Hal does not reply, but his face hardens a little.*) It will be a pleasant change for you. This butterfly life is rather monotonous, after all. What are you doing?

Hal. (without modifying his terrific speed). Addressing some envelopes for Aunt Mary.

Mr. M. Why are n't you at school? I say, why are n't you at school? You ought not to be hanging around here at this hour of the day.

Hal. (after looking at him steadily for a few seconds)

"In the fell clutch of Circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud:
Under the bludgeonings of Chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed."

You make me tired. You know why I'm not at school.

Because I am Under-Secretary to the House of Parker.
"Keep off the grass."

(The Curtain falls on Hal, writing with speed, his Uncle looking at him in covert surprise.)

ACT II

(The Parlor of the Parker Home, at 6 o'clock, the evening of the Same Day. Emma is lighting the lamps. Upon which process, enter Harry Hess.)

Hal. *(having watched Emma a full minute from the portieres).* Hello, Dolly Dimple! Trying to throw a little light on the subject?

Emma. *(sedately).* I am lighting the lamps.

Hal. Oh, pardon me. I thought you were sweeping the steps. *(contemplates her with admiration).* Say, I like blue ribbons in your cap better than pink ones.

Emma. *(dimpling).* I never wear pink.

Hal. *(advancing into the room).* Oh, yes, you do. You wore pink ribbons last Sunday. The Sunday before that, you wore blue.

Emma. You remember colors a long time.

Hal. *(coming closer to her).* I remember some colors in conjunction with some people a long time. *(There is a pause.)* Dolly Dimple, do you dance? *(She makes no answer, being wholly engrossed with the lamps.)* Dolly Dimple, do you dance?

Emma. There, that's done. *(starts for the portiere).* There are only two lamps.

Hal. *(blowing one light out).* There's one too many, in my judgment. You say you do dance?

Emma. *(reproachfully).* I'll have to light that lamp again.

Hal. *(standing close by the lamp in question).* All right, maybe you had better, as we're going to have com-

pany. Come on, light it. Are n't you going to light it?

Emma. You light it; you're right there.

Hal. Young woman, it is n't my duty to light the lamps. Come on, Dolly Dimple, please! Please, Dolly Dimple!

(Enter MR. MARTIN, slowly.)

Mr. M. (sniffing). What's that nasty odor? Is anything burning?

Hal. Nothing but this lamp.

Emma. (going to the defunct lamp). Maybe it's this lamp. It went out suddenly.

Mr. M. (dryly). I suspected as much. Well, light it again. I hate these gobs of red gloom! In a house fitted with gas and electricity, we use coal oil lamps! We'll be swell even if we all die of suffocation! Where's the paper?

Hal. (watching Emma relight the lamp). Uncle Andy, I'm sorry to see you in the dumps, this night of all nights. Cheer up: the Moneyed Member of the Family is about to descend upon us.

Emma. Is that all, Mr. Martin?

Mr. M. (more graciously). Yes, my dear, unless you get me the evening paper.

Emma. I'll see if it's come yet. (She goes out, sedately.)

Hal. Uncle Andy, I don't think you ought to call Emma "my dear." She's a poor girl, making her own living, and it's hard enough without—

Mr. M. (seating himself comfortably in a big chair). She is, and incidentally she's a mighty pretty one. I am an old man, and it's one of the fifteen privileges of old age to call every pretty girl "my dear."

Hal. But still a pretty girl's only a woman, and all women are prone to misunderstand such "privileges." I think you ought to be more careful.

Mr. M. (leaning forward and inspecting Hal's shoes). My dear nephew, where do your new shoes pinch?

Hal. (resentfully). What do you mean? These shoes are n't new.

Mr. M. Neither is the joke—nor the situation. But let us avoid personalities and trivialities. You say that Mrs. Colvin is coming tonight?

Hal. (stramming around resentfully). She is.

Mr. M. (pleasantly conversational). Ah, I've heard much of Mrs. Katherine Colvin. She is what one might call a Family Institution. Is she handsome?

Hal. (knocking over an ornament). All rich women are handsome.

Mr. M. (raising his brows). You answer with a wisdom beyond your years. What did you break? Sit down, why don't you, or turn up the light if you can't see.

Hal. (repairing the damage hastily). Oh, I can see, thank you. I'm not so young as I look.

Mr. M. (with a broad grin). My dear nephew, if your shoes pinch, why don't you change 'em?

(EMMA comes in with the paper, which she hands to
MR. MARTIN.)

Thank you, my dear. It's a great comfort to have a girl like you around the house.

Emma. Thank you, Mr. Martin. (*goes*).

Hal. (while Mr. Martin is opening the paper). Say, Uncle, speaking of Aunt Kate, did you know that she is—

Mr. M. (scanning the paper, reading headlines only). "Congress is Waiting." Is Congress ever doing anything else? (*reads*). "The Strike Situation Unchanged." I don't know that we expected it to change. The "strike situation" is chronic. (*reads*). "Seventy-Five Miners Entombed. All Given Up for Dead." Poor devils, poor devils!" (*reads*). "Her Wedding Gown Costs Fifteen Thousand." And cheap at that probably. And yet peo—

ple wonder why the Socialist Party is growing in grace! (to Hal). Well, speaking of your Aunt Kate, what is it? We've been speaking of her all day.

Hal. (*walking up and down*). That's a most unfortunate affliction, is n't it?

Mr. M. (*from over his paper*). What affliction?

(*Enter LOUISE, wearing a high-neck evening gown.*)

Louise. Oh, I thought Mamma was here. That new cook does n't know straight up!—Well Hal, I have n't seen your hair so slick since you gave your oration. (*She takes a highly dramatic attitude, her eyes full of laughter*). "And when the People are aroused at last,—the People, in whose toil-worn hands the sovereign power is vested; the People, whose mighty voice rings down the living ages,—when the People, I say, are roused as a strong man—"

Hal. Oh, I say, Louise, let up!

Louise. But your hair does look brand-new, Hal, honest. Aunt Kate ought to feel honored.

Mr. M. I wonder how she will feel when she sees you? Are you actually going to dinner in that dress?

Louise. (*surprised*). Why, yes, Uncle, I thought I would. Why?

Mr. M. (*anxiously*). Are you comfortable?

Louise. (*gazing down at her dress, puzzled*). Yes, I—I think so. Or at least I thought I was. What is the matter with me?

Mr. M. Turn around. Where is your train? Where are your pearls? And where is—pardon me, but where is your neck?

Louise. Oh, you mean this old dress? I thought you did n't like low-necked gowns?

Mr. M. I don't. I despise 'em. I have n't seen you look so nice since you wore your hair in pigtails.

Louise. Thank you, Uncle Andy.

Mr. M. How do you like her, Harry?

Hal. Oh, for a change she'll do, but when a girl has a pretty neck, why should she wear a collar up to her ears?

Louise. (to *Hal*). Is n't this more home-like?

Hal. (with a grin of understanding). Yes, more Orphan-home-like! You look like a portrait trying to come out of its frame.

Mr. M. Hal, be careful. You stand a horrible chance of becoming epigrammatic.

Louise. That's too much for me. I must see to the dinner. Aunt Kate ought to be here in a few minutes. (goes).

Mr. M. What were you saying about Mrs. Colvin?

Hal. (taking up a book, and seating himself). Aunt Kate? I don't remember especially.

Mr. M. You said she had an affliction of some sort.

Hal. (mightily engaged with his book). Oh, did I? Maybe I referred to her money.

Mr. M. (not without irritation). No, you did n't. You meant a—er—a physical infirmity. (The distant door bell rings.)

Hal. (with engaging reluctance). I guess I should n't have mentioned it, if Aunt Mary has n't told you. Maybe Aunt Kate's sensitive about it. I had n't thought of that. Now a man would n't think of trying to hide such a thing. (There are gay voices beyond the portieres.)

Mr. M. What's the matter with her, Boy?

Hal. I guess I had better let Aunt Mary tell you—

Mr. M. But I ought to know. Don't you understand how embarrassing it will be—

Hal. (hastily rising). Hush, Uncle Andy! Here she is!

(Enter MR. SYDNEY PARKER and MRS. KATHERINE COLVIN, laden like travelers.)

Mr. P. (joyously). I got her! (to *Hal*). My dear

boy, this is your Aunt Kitty. (*to Mrs. Colvin*). I think you've never met Uncle Andy,—Mary's brother?

Mrs. C. (*extending her gloved hand*). I'm delighted to meet you, "Uncle Andy." I must call you that, must n't I? (*to Hal*). And who is this big boy? I ought to know your eyes. (*She studies Hal's face earnestly.*) Is this Harry Henderson Hess?

Mr. M. Prince Hal, the Exuberant, Mrs. Colvin. "Harry Henderson Hess" only when the pay roll is made out.

Mrs. C. (*to Hal*). You have your mother's eyes. You poor motherless boy! Kiss me! (*to Mr. Parker*). I had forgotten that the boy was with you. I have n't seen him since he wore kilts,—when they lived in Reading, you know. (*takes off her hat*).

Hal. (*recovering his self-assurance*). I remember when you came to see us. We had apple dumplings for desert, and you gave me a "Pilgrim's Progress," and you wore big gold bracelets.

Mrs. C. (*shedding her wraps*). Did I? I suppose you were very much impressed?

Hal. (*assisting her*). I did n't want a book; I wanted a popgun.

Mr. M. (*reseating herself, still holding the paper*). I'll wager you did! Any old thing to make a noise! (*to Mrs. Colvin*). He still likes the popgun variety of gift.

Mr. P. (*collecting the wraps and baggage*). Where's Mamma? And Louise? I'll call them. (*He goes, quite flushed with happiness.*)

Mrs. C. (*scating herself with the little preening movements of a pretty woman who has just taken off her wraps*). And Wellington is a man, in business for himself. It makes me feel about one hundred! (*to Mr. Martin, who shows a secret anxiety to get back to his paper*). Go on with your paper, Uncle Andy. We never suspend family habits for me. (*to Hal*). Come here, Prince Hal. Do you still like popguns?

Hal. (drawing a low ottoman near her chair). Are you going to give me a present?

Mrs. C. Boy, you are very like your mother. Of course I'm going to give you a present—several, I hope. What would you rather have?

Hal. Will you really give me what I want most—of all the things in the world?

Mrs. C. (pensively). There are a good many things in the world,—beautiful things, useful things, worthless things,—a good many things! What do you want most—an automobile?

Hal. (seriously and awkwardly). No, I'd—I'd rather have books. (*Mr. Martin looks over the top of his paper in mild surprise.*)

Mrs. C. (incredulously). Books? You'd rather have books than an automobile?

Hal. (earnestly). Yes, Ma'am. (*Mr. Martin lowers his paper an inch.*)

Mrs. C. Well, this is the pleasantest shock I've had for a long time. I did n't know I was going to find a "booky" nephew! What books do you want?

Hal. (at a venture). Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," and—and Plutarch's "Lives." (*Mr. Martin's paper sinks two inches.*)

Mrs. C. (tilting *Hal's* face lightly). Really do you want such books? Why have n't I known it all these years? "Honor bright?"

Hal. Honor bright, Aunt Kate. (*Mr. Martin's paper sinks lower.*)

Mrs. C. What do you read most,—history?

Hal. Yes, history and—er economics. (*Mr. Martin's paper sinks to his knees with a rustling crash.*)

Mrs. C. (turning, startled). Oh, what is the matter, Mr. Martin?

Mr. M. (rising, and sputtering from suppressed laughter). I—I forgot s—s—something. Excuse me. (*He hurries out.*)

Hal. (calmly). You must n't mind Uncle Andy. He's absent-minded, and then he—he's frightfully deaf.

Mrs. C. Deaf? The poor man! I had n't noticed it.

Hal. (picking up her handkerchief). Oh, he pretends he is n't, but half the time he does n't hear a thing. And of course we try not to notice it.

Mrs. C. Of course not. The poor man!

(Enter MRS. PARKER, soberly gowned.)

Mrs. P. My dear Aunt Kate!

Mrs. C. My dearest Mary!

Mrs. P. (holding her at arms' length). How well you're looking! This is a delightful surprise!

Mrs. C. (rescating herself). It's a surprise to me. I had n't any idea of coming home for three months yet.

Mrs. P. (seating herself). You're going to take a good long rest now, I hope? *(Hal, having risen at Mrs. Parker's entrance, rescats himself on the ottoman.)*

Mrs. C. I don't know. I have several projects on hand, and business is business, even when you're tired.

Mrs. P. (unfurling a tiny fan). Always strenuous, Aunt Kate.

Mrs. C. Not strenuous, but interested. It's such a big, big world, and there are so many people in it doing so many queer and pathetic things! I wish I might live a thousand years!

Mrs. P. (smiling that gracious society smile that won't come off). That does n't sound very much like a tired woman.

Mrs. C. Oh, I'm not tired. I have never been tired in my life, I think. With people who don't have to earn their own living, weariness is a mere pose, more or less fashionable. I can't get things done fast enough,—I can't live enough at one time, that's all the trouble with me.

Mrs. P. (smiling that stylish smile, and toying with the little fan). The women of Egypt again, Aunt Kate?

Mrs. C. (carelessly). Yes, Egypt, and other outly-

ing districts. (*She turns to Hal, as if for relief*). And it makes me feel young just to look at this big boy here. How like your sister he is!

Mrs. P. (*looking at Hal lovingly*). Yes, he is very like her,—very like her.

Mrs. C. What are you interested in, Hal? Books, you say?

Mrs. P. Oh yes, books, books, books! This is his last year in the high school, and of course his work is very heavy.

Hal. (*with a very genuine sigh*). Yes, I got to dig. A man can't do much nowadays without an education.

Mrs. C. (*looking at Hal thoughtfully*). Oh, I don't know. It depends upon the man. Of course some men are able to succeed in spite of their education, but it takes a strong man to do it. What are you going to do?

Hal. (*plaiting her laced handkerchief on his knee, for he has retained it since picking it up*). Ask the Powers. Aunt Mary, what am I going to do?

Mrs. P. His Uncle thinks he had better go to Annapolis.

Mrs. C. (*sitting erect*). The Navy? Send *this* boy to the Navy?

Mrs. P. (*complacently*). His Uncle thinks it's just the place for him.

Mrs. C. (*sitting erecter*). Sydney must have taken leave of his senses! His father did n't send *him* to the Navy! Hal, do you want to go to Annapolis?

Hal. (*without looking up from his meditative plaiting*). Ask the Powers.

Mrs. C. (*gravely*). I am asking you. Do you want to go to Annapolis?

Hal. (*intent on his occupation*). No, I can't say that I'm yearning to parade the high seas in a war ship.

Mrs. C. Do you believe in war?

Hal. (*quietly, not looking up*). No.

Mrs. P. (*laughing*). How funny you are, Aunt

Kate! Hal's never had two thoughts about war in all his life! What's a boy of his age "believe" or disbelieve? (*Hal is apparently too much absorbed in the laced handkerchief to notice this.*) And the Navy is so easy and aristocratic! Why, a man's career is practically ready-made, you know.

Hal. Yes, a sort of hand-me-down.

Mrs. C. (*much wrought upon*). It's the last place on earth for a man of real energy! You might as well send a boy to a monastery, and be done with it. In either case you tie his hands most effectually. I hope I'll never live to see a nephew of *mine* relegated to the Navy. There are other side-tracks that are at least progressive.

Hal. (*looking up at last*). I guess there's no use getting excited. I may not pass. Wellington's bet me a runabout that I won't graduate.

Mrs. C. (*sinking back in her chair*). Are you very anxious to graduate?

(*Enter MR. PARKER, in high spirits.*)

Mr. P. (*beaming on them all*). Hal anxious to graduate? Not so anybody'd notice it. His ambition is to be arrested for scorching. I tell him he does n't appreciate his advantages. Why, when I was Hal's age I owned the third interest in a milk route, horse and wagon and all!—Do you remember, that old speckled horse, Kitty, wall-eyed as a bat? And the wagon—each wheel pointing a different way? Everything about the outfit wobbled; you could hear us coming a mile! Yes sir, I started life driving a milk wagon; I was eleven years old, and I got up every morning at 4 o'clock, and hustled around like a good one. And when I'd sneak down stairs in the dark, Kitty would stick her head through a crack of the door, and say, "Got your mit-tens, Syd?"

Mrs. C. (*laughing gently*). And you never had! And you would n't wear ear mufflers! I never slept any after you'd gone. I expected the milkman to bring you

home any minute, frozen stiff!

Mr. P. (*striding up and down in the greatest enjoyment, plummy and proud*). Christmas, but was n't it cold those January mornings! Why, the milk cans burned your hands, they were so bloomin' cold! Show me anything frostier than a two gallon can of skim milk at 4 o'clock of a winter morning—show me! We did n't use bottles in those days; we ladeled it out with a battered old dipper, and the people left jugs and pitchers on the steps for me to stumble over. And the old horse would amble along, lost in his own meditations, and the sun would n't come up, and would n't come up, and *would n't* come up! That's the sort of thing that makes a man of a boy, I'm here to tell you! I earned two dollars a week, and now (*with a comprehensive gesture*) here we are! (*He slaps Hal on the back.*) You've got a cinch, my boy, breakfasting with the family at 9 o'clock!

Hal. (*grinning*). Do you want me to drive a milk wagon?

Mr. P. I want you to appreciate your opportunities, and pay some attention to your studies. I had only three years' schooling, sandwiched in at odd times, and I earned the money to pay for that. It was a hard pull, but I made it. Hey, Kitty? How do you like our shack?

Mrs. C. I think that you were very lucky to find such a house. You rent it for the winter season, I suppose? It's a very good idea.

Mr. P. Rent it the deuce! I should say we did n't!

Mrs. C. Oh, Syd, you don't mean to say that you *own* this beautiful house?

Mr. P. (*with ill-concealed pride*). No, I don't, but Mary does. I gave it to her two years ago as a slight token of esteem and regard. Fact is, Kate, I'm on Easy Street at last. The women folks can give all the tea-parties they want to, and Wellington—

Hal. (*rising, having been in telegraphic communication with Mrs. Parker for some time*). "From Milk Wagon to Bank President. Or, How He Won Out. A

Story for Boys. In Five Volumes. Volume One. A Happy Four O'Clock."—Aunt Mary, I'm famished. Is the new cook still on the job?

Mrs. P. One never knows. I left Louise trying to straighten things out. Go see what you can do. (*Hal goes.*)

Mr. P. There is no hurry. Give the woman time—give the woman time. (*to Mrs. Colvin*). As I was saying, the women have their swell tea parties, Wellington has his own car, and Hal has only to choose.

Mrs. C. (*with guarded interest*). What do you mean, "Hal has only to choose?"

Mr. P. (*still walking about, clate*). I mean that the boy can do what he pleases. Wellington wants to coach him, but I rather favor the Navy. I say Wall Street does n't offer a young man a broad enough field,—that is, it is hardly a profession in itself. So I favor the Navy. So does Mary. The boy's got brains enough, if only he'd apply himself. The last thing on earth he thinks about is his books. But there's no hurry; we're never young but once. Let him have his fling. I'll see that he never wants for anything. I've made enough and to spare for all of us, thank God.

Mrs. P. (*who has been more or less nervous for some time,—mostly more!*). Sydney, for pity's sake! Stop! Knock on wood!—Aunt Kate, I never knew him to prance around and boast like this before.

Mr. P. I guess a man has a right to tell his own sister how he's getting on in the world. Kitty stayed by me when we were poor, and I will not desert her in the days of my prosperity.

(*Enter LOUISE and WELLINGTON.*)

Well. (*smiling a general "Good evening" on everybody*). A noble sentiment, father. I take off my hat.

Mrs. C. (*rising impulsively*). And who is this—not Louise?

Louise. My dear Aunt Kate! We're very happy to see you.

Well. Dad, here a minute. (*He consults with his father, apart.*)

Mrs. C. Well, well, what a young lady you have become! All you children seem to have grown up over night.

Louise. Like mushrooms, as it were. I've been trying to hurry up dinner, but you know what a new cook is.—Mamma, Mrs. Reynoldes wants you at the 'phone. (*Nodding apologies to Mrs. Colvin, Mrs. Parker leaves the room.*)

Louise. Aunt Kate, you don't look five minutes older. How dare you defy time!

Mrs. C. (*rescating herself*). 'Tis false!

Mr. P. (*turning from Wellington*). All right. Tell him seventy thousand; not a cent less. And the deal must be closed by 6 o'clock tomorrow. Now, don't ask me anything more about business. My sister Kate's here, and the shop is closed for a holiday. (*to Louise*). Daughter, how queer you look! Is it your hair?

Well. (*putting up his pocket notebook*). Dad, never ask a woman that question! First place, they're never sure whose hair it is; second place, if they did know, it would be even more embarrassing. Most likely that hair grew on the head of some fair peasant girl.—Or is it American grown, Louise?

Mr. P. (*inspecting Louise*). Well, but you seem so strange. You look like some naughty little girl who grew up to be a saint.

Mrs. C. And died in the last chapter.

Well. A moving example to all other naughty little girls.

Mr. P. (*turning Louise around by her shoulders*). It must be your dress. I don't think you fixed up much for your Aunt Kitty.

Well. (*inspecting Louise curiously*). By George, that's what makes you look so natty,—that short dress! Now you're the little "Weezy" who used to fight with me for the last caramel in the box. "As sure as the vine

grows 'round the stump, You are my precious sugar lump." I like my lost little sister. (*The distant door bell rings sharply, twice.*) (*to Mrs. Colvin.*) Usually Louise prefers the serpentine effect—the silky, slazy, snakey style.

Mrs. C. (*looking at Louise as if she were a great distance off*). I'm sorry to hear it. I came over on the *Muritania*, you know, and all the women were dragging those abominable trains about. I think I'll go home on a tramp steamer!

Mr. P. "Home," Kitty? Don't you consider America your home? "Home is where the heart is," they say.

W'ell. Aunt Kate's heart is with the down-trodden and the oppressed, "from Greenland's icy mountains to India's coral strand." The people in America are too comfortable for Aunt Kate.

Mrs. C. (*smiling*). Not too comfortable, but too complacent.

(*Enter HAL, a snowy napkin pinned on as an apron, and beating a small silver tray, as if it were a gong.*)

Louise. (*to Hal, anxiously*). Who was it rang the bell?

Hal. (*parading around, beating the gong*). Give it up. Dinner is now served in the dining car! First call for dinner! First call for dinner! Dinner is now served in the dining car! First call for dinner!

(*MADÉLINE TRACEY, handsomely gowned for traveling, steps between the portieres, and stands, watching the family group with smiling archness.*)

Mr. P. (*placing his hands on Louise's shoulder*). Kitty, what do you think of my little girl? And Wellington, here,—is n't he a pretty fine specimen?

W'ell. Dad, don't! You make me feel like a prize pumpkin!

Hal. (*beating his silver gong softly*). Ladies and gentlemen, we next invite your attention to Exhibit B. Catalogue Number 11507. The Only Napoleon of

Finance in Captivity. This extraordinary specimen was caught red-handed—

Mr. P. Now, Harry, subside.—Wellington, come here. Stand beside your sister. Closer. There, show me anything finer in the City of Brotherly Love! (*gazes at them with open pride*). Now, Kitty, these are my “hostages to fortune.”

Mad. And a brave brace of ~~him~~ they be, yer Honor! (*Everybody turns, startled.*)

Louise. (*aghast*). Madeline!

Well. (*joyously, starting forward.*) Madeline!

Hal. (*dropping the silver gong*). “And the band played ‘Annie Laurie!’”

ACT III

(*The Sitting room of the Parker Home, after breakfast, Tuesday Morning. Mr. Martin is reading the paper. Enter H.M., in his usual headlong fashion.*)

Hal. Where’s my Aunt Kate?

Mr. M. Not knowing, I could not say. Why are n’t you at school?

Hal. (*taking up a chance book, and seating himself*). I don’t have to go to school today. I’m delegated to show Aunt Kate the town. Guess I’ll study till she comes down.

Mr. M. (*sarcastically*). Don’t distress yourself.

Hal. (*cheerfully*). Oh, she won’t be long. We’re going to have lots of fun “browsing in the bookshops,” as Aunt Kate says.

Mr. M. (*grinning over the top of his paper*). Gibbon’s “Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire” or Plutarch’s “Lives?”

Hal. (*gravely*). Poppuns. (*There succeeds a silence, both of them reading, Hal with growing absorption.*)

Mr. M. (*suddenly*). Say, what’s the matter with Mrs. Colvin?

Hal. (*looking up from his book*). I did n't know that Cleopatra was an Grecian, did you?

Mr. M. There are several things you don't know, my son. I was not speaking of Cleopatra. Listen. I am asking about Mrs. Colvin. What's the matter with her?

Hal. (*lost in scholarly speculations*). There is n't anything the matter with her, I hope. Cleopatra married her brother, a little shaver about ten years old. Now don't that beat you? That was the regular thing with kings and queens in those days, this man says. Excuse me.

Mr. M. (*severely*). I am asking about Mrs. Colvin. Please have the politeness to attend to my question. What is the matter with her?

Hal. (*vaguely*). "Matter with her,"—with my Aunt Kate? Why, nothing, that I know of. What do you mean?

Mr. M. You said last night that she had a—er—a—that is, I understood you to say she had a physical infirmity.

Hal. (*staring at him*). I never said any such thing, so help me! Oh, yes, I remember now.

Mr. M. (*impatiently*). Well, what is it?

Hal. (*slowly*). Why, she's—she's—did n't Aunt Mary tell you?

Mr. M. If she had, would I be asking you?

Hal. I'd rather let Aunt Mary tell you. It's her place.

Mr. M. What is it, I say?

Hal. (*with manifest reluctance*). Why, she's—she's horribly deaf.

Mr. M. She did n't seem so last night.

Hal. (*carelessly*). Of course not; she's awfully sensitive about it, and pretends to hear lots more than she does. But pshaw, most deaf people do that. Is n't she

great? She knows everything, and she's not a bit stuck up about it. I wish she'd adopt me.

Mr. M. (*shrugging*). Adopt you! Adopt you? (*looks him over coolly*). You'd be a bird to adopt! I'd as soon adopt a Mauser rifle! What would she do with you?

Hal. (*slowly, twistfully*). Love me. (*While Mr. Martin is staring, speechless with astonishment,*)

(*Enter EMMA.*)

Emma. (*to Hal*). Your Aunt wants you right away.

Hal. (*looking at her remotely, twistfully*). Which aunt? I have two aunts now, Dolly Dimple.

Emma. (*quite gently*). Mrs. Parker.

Hal. (*coming out of it*). Do you not see that you are disturbing my studies?

Emma. (*smiling*). Yes, but your aunt wants you right away. (*goes*).

Hal. (*marking his place in the book with much pomp*). Present tense, imperative mood. That's my Aunt Mary. (*to Mr. Martin*). This is the way it goes. You see how much studying one can get done in *this* house. (*He starts out.*)

Mr. M. Oh, Harry, by the way—

Hal. (*turning*). Yes, what is it?

Mr. M. I don't think you ought to call Emma "Dolly Dimple." She's only a poor girl, trying to earn her own living, and it's—

Hal. (*with an expansive grin*). She is, and incidentally she's a mighty pretty one. If Aunt Kate asks for me, tell her to wait. I'll be back in a minute. (*goes, with his head unusually erect.*)

Mr. M. (*solus*). Love him! The Prince is getting sentimental. . . . I suppose the boy *does* miss his mother, Mary and Louise being so taken up with social stunts. It's not much of a place to raise a harum-scarum like Hal. He'll probably wind up in jail—or Congress! . . . Love him! That's the first time I've heard him intimate

that life is not all beer and skittles. (*He takes up his paper with an unconscious sigh, then lowers it.*) Love him! The poor lonesome kid!

(*Enter Mrs. COLVIN, wearing her hat, and carrying her gloves, furs and long coat.*)

Mrs. C. (*hesitatingly*). I thought Harry was here. (*Mr. Martin, reading, does not hear her.*) I thought Harry was here. Oh, I forgot; he's deaf. (*Then she speaks in a loud and painfully distinct tone, as she does throughout the interview.*) Do you know where Harry is, Mr. Martin?

Mr. M. (*looking up in surprise, and answering in a loud, distinct tone, as he does throughout the interview*). He was here a minute ago, and he said to ask you please to wait.

Mrs. C. (*staring at him*). Hal and I are going shopping—going “to take the day off,” as he says, but I feel rather ashamed to keep him out of school.

Mr. M. Oh, you need n't mind that. He has more days off than on.

Mrs. C. (*scating herself near him*). You mean there are so many distractions?

Mr. M. (*aside*). The devil! She thinks I'm deaf, too! (*to Mrs. Colvin*). Oh, he does n't give two whoops for school. But it does n't matter; he won't need to know much.

Mrs. C. (*frowning, aside*). The poor dear man! He thinks I'm deaf! (*aloud*). What do you mean, he won't have to know much?

Mr. M. All he'll have to do is Play the Game.

Mrs. C. What game?

Mr. M. The Money Game.

Mrs. C. (*edging her chair closer*). Wall Street?

Mr. M. Wall Street, the Speedway, Midnight Cafés, chorus beauties,—that sort of thing. They call it “Playing the Game.”

Mrs. C. (*anxious, but valiantly shouting*). He's going to graduate, is n't he?

Mr. M. (*aside*). She'll burst a blood-vessel! (*aloud*). He'll never get that far. This is no place for study. He can't put his mind on books when everybody else is talking about motor cars and bridge, can he?

Mrs. C. No, Mr. Martin, no boy could. (*Aside*). This is dreadful!

Mr. M. That's what I say. No boy could. Hal's a fine fellow, but he's too much of a boy not to care. (*aside*). This is terrible!

Mrs. C. Care for what?

Mr. M. (*aside*). How she does shout at me!—(*aloud*)—For the things other people are caring about.

Mrs. C. Of course not.

(*Enter MADELINE TRACEY, in an elaborate morning gown, and carrying an evening wrap.*)

Mad. (*smiling at Mr. Martin, but addressing Mrs. Colvin*). Pardon me, Mrs. Colvin, but I want to know how you like this wrap that I brought Louise. She has n't seen it yet.

Mr. M. (*looking toward the door, like a trapped man*). Where did you say you and Hal were going, Mrs. Colvin?

Mrs. C. (*taking the wrap from Madeline, but speaking to Mr. Martin in a loud tone*). We are going to the book shops and the Art Gallery.

Mr. M. (*rising with celerity, and speaking in a loud tone, to Madeline's polite surprise*). I'll get you my catalogue of the paintings.

Mrs. C. (*nodding*). Thank you, I shall be glad to have it. (*Mr. Martin goes out, glad to make his escape*).

Mad. Pardon me, Mrs. Colvin, but why do you shout at Mr. Martin like that?

Mrs. C. (*examining the wrap*). Because he's deaf.

Mad. No, he is n't. You ask him.

Mrs. C. Yes, he is, deaf as a barn door, poor man.

I'm quite exhausted trying to talk to him. Is n't it too bad? And he's so clever. And he thinks I'm deaf! It was too funny! He positively roared at me! We were talking about Hal.

Mad. (*carelessly*). Yes, Hal is a fortunate boy. I think he's *such* a dear!

Mrs. C. Why is he a fortunate boy?

Mad. Why, he'll have everything on earth,—the Parkers are awfully fond of him. He'll step right into the best set in Philadelphia, and Wellington's good for 'most anything in New York. Most boys would give their eyes to be in Hal's shoes. How do you like that? Try it on.

Mrs. C. (*shrinking back*). Oh, my dear, I'm too old for such gorgeous things!

Mad. (*taking the wrap*). Go on; I want to see how it hangs. (*Mrs. Colvin permits Madeline to put it on her, though with silent protestations.*) Oh, how charming you look! You lovely thing! Walk around! (*Mrs. Colvin does so, pretending to be very "swell."*) It's just perfect on you. You ought to have one like it.

Mrs. C. (*looking down at herself*). I'm never happy in this sort of thing. Let's see you in it. (*The exchange is made.*) There, that's something like!

Mad. (*sauntering around, quite in her element*). Do you think Louise will like it?

Mrs. C. (*adjusting the set of the wrap*). Of course she'll like it, but—pardon me, but has Louise anything to wear with it?

Mad. (*squirming around in an endeavor to see the back*). Louise? Louise Parker? She has some of the swellest gowns you ever saw.

Mrs. C. (*seating herself, and taking up her gloves*). Then Louise is a society girl?

Mad. She is one of the most popular girls in Philadelphia. Did n't you know? You ought to be proud of Louise; she cuts a wide swath, I tell you. And she's popular in the best sense; people like her for herself, you

know, not because her mother gives such beautiful entertainments. Most popularity is no deeper than that; you are liked for what you can give. No give, no get. Society is an awful graft, really. How do you like these sleeves?

Mrs. C. (fitting on her gloves with absent carefulness). They are very pretty. If society is such a graft, why do you care about it?

Mad. I don't care about it particularly; nobody does. But it's something to do. The days are long enough, as it is.

(Enter MR. MARTIN, with a book.)

Mr. M. (very loudly, to Mrs. Colvin, who rises to take the book). Here is the latest catalogue. 1909.

Mrs. C. (in a loud tone). Thank you. Mr. Martin, pardon me, but I want to ask you—I mean I thought you—*(desperately)* That is, are n't you deaf?

Mr. M. (in a loud tone). No, Mrs. Colvin, I am not deaf.

Mrs. C. (in an ordinary tone). Then I beg your pardon for shouting at you. I thought—that is, Hal said,—or I should say I understood him to say that you were.

Mr. M. (wrathfully). Did Hal tell you I was deaf?

Mrs. C. Yes, Mr. Martin.

Mr. M. Why, Hal told me you were deaf.

Mrs. C. (indignantly). I'm not!

Mr. M. (laughing grimly). Either am I.

Mad. (laughing). Then it's up to the Prince to make amends.

(Enter HAL, carrying his overcoat and hat.)

Hal. (radiantly). I'm ready, Aunt Kate. Let's hike. *(to Madeline).* It's up to me to make amends for what? I owe not any man.

Mrs. C. You said your uncle was deaf.

Mr. M. You told me Mrs. Colvin was deaf.

Hal. (*agrecably*). E'en so. What then?

Mr. M. Here we've been shouting at each other like a pair of fog-horns—

Hal. (*with tranquil impudence*). If your new shoes pinch, Uncle Andy, why don't you change 'em?

Mr. M. Oh, I see. I see. Sits the wind in *that* quarter?—Shall I tell your Aunt how your shoes pinched?

Hal. (*looking him in the eye, as man to man*). As you please. But really I don't think the story would interest a woman of Aunt Kate's experience. There's some mail for you in the hall.

Mr. M. (*smiling*). A rascal often saves himself by his cleverness; a prince, by his impudence. (*turns to leave the room*). Well, well, beg your aunt's pardon, and I'll call it square. (*He goes, rather tickled than otherwise.*)

Mad. What is this parable of the shoes?

Hal. (*turning to Mrs. Colvin, who stands gravely regarding him*). Aunt Kate, I beg your pardon. Uncle Andy made me mad and I did it to get even. But that was—that was (*stops, turns away, then faces the music resolutely*) that was before you came. I mean it—it began before I—before I saw you. (*He begins to fumble in his pockets confusedly.*)

Mrs. C. What difference could that make?

Hal. (*embarrassed, but standing by his guns*). I would n't have—I mean I could n't have started such a game after I saw you. Nobody could. I tried to call it off afterwards, but Uncle Andy kept at me. And I—did n't realize how embarrassing it would be for you. (*He turns to Madeline, who has been watching him curiously*). Are you going to the opera this morning, Miss Tracey?

Mad. (*taking a few mincing steps*). This is the wrap I brought for Louise. Do you like it?

Hal. (*taking a fold of the cloth in his hand*). Yes, it's swell. Louise will look stunning in that.

Mad. (*pouting*). Don't I look stunning?

Hal. Oh you, you always look out of sight. You're the Swellest Thing Going.

Mad. (*throwing him a kiss*). Hal, you're a darling,—a perfect darling! You pay me the nicest compliments of any man I know.

Hal. (*admiring her with the frankness of an unspoiled boy*). I'd sure be a lunkhead if I could n't appreciate you in that creation. You're—you're—why, your regal! (*Mrs. Colvin studies this byplay with covert disapproval.*)

Mad. (*taking off the wrap*). If I'm regal, being but a commoner, I suppose a real Prince would be royal. You put it on,—have you ever worn an opera coat?

Hal. (*permitting her to help him on with it, and displaying boyish pleasure in the performance*). I have not made a practice of wearing one. These sleeves are great. Why don't you always wear sleeves lined with cobwebs?

Mad. (*standing off to look at him*). You handsome boy! How do you feel?

Hal. I feel as if I ought to dine off peacocks' tongues exclusively. "Bring forth the catiff!" "Updrawbridge, groom! What warden, ho!" that's the way I feel.

(*Enter LOUISE, in a subdued morning gown.*)

Hal. Louise, look what Madeline brought you. Is n't it swagger?

Louise. Oh, is that for me—truly? Why Madeline Tracey, that's perfectly dear of you! Let me try it on. I hope I look as well in it as Hal does.

Hal. (*watching the transfer with interest*). It's just the right length. Are n't the sleeves out of sight?—Aunt Kate, look at Louise!

Mrs. C. (*looking at Hal, and speaking gently*). It's very effective. (*The girls discuss the wrap apart.*) I did n't know you were so fond of pretty clothes, Harry.

Hal. I'm not fond of them—especially, but a fellow

has to care for what's around, I suppose. And look at that! It's a thing of beauty, even if Louise were n't in it. I think that women wear such dandy togs.

Mrs. C. (rising to get her coat). Some women do not.

Hal. (springing to get it). You mean poor women?

Mrs. C. Poor women and ignorant women and—women in bondage.

Hal. Women in bondage—I know. The women of Egypt.

Mrs. C. (adjusting her furs). What do you know about the women of Egypt?

Hal. (straggling into his overcoat). I know they have n't any cloaks like that, and they don't go to the opera, not on your life. It's pretty tough to be a woman over there. Believe me. Don't you wear overshoes? Where are they?

Mrs. C. In the hall.

Hal. I'll get them. We got to hustle. *(He hurries out.)*

Louise. (coming forward). Madeline says that I can change this, if I don't like the shade. Do you think gray would be more becoming?

Mrs. C. (gently, sadly). I think gray is a beautiful shade for evening, dear.

(Enter WELLINGTON, wearing a furred coat, and carrying his hat.)

Well. I've brought the car around. Come on, everybody, let's show Aunt Kate what can be done in the way of speed. And we'll show this New York girl a thing or two. *(He places his hand an instant on Madeline's arm.) (to Mrs. Colvin).* Are you going out?

Mrs. C. I promised Hal I'd buy him some books.

Louise. (starting for the door). Let's all go with Wellington. Hal won't mind.

Well. It's a fine morning. The air is like champaign.

(Enter HAL, radiant, with the overshoes.)

Hal. (to Wellington). I thought you'd gone to Baltimore. (kneels to put on Mrs. Colvin's overshoes). Other foot, Aunt Kate. Left foot first is bad luck.

Well. I'm going to take the ladies out in the car.—Go on, you girls. Get ready.

Hal. (laboring with the overshoes). Aunt Kate can't go. We're going to buy books.

Mad. You can buy books another day. They'll keep.

Well. Strikes me you're rather keen on books all of a sudden, Kid.

Louise. Yes, and Aunt Kate does n't care about shops. She hates them, don't you, Aunt Kate? (Hal rises to his feet, looking from one to the other.)

Well. (slapping him on the back). Come on, Boy, jolly up. What do you care about books? Let me show Aunt Kate a good time. She's going away tomorrow.

Hal. (to Mrs. Colvin). Are you going away tomorrow?

Mrs. C. Yes, in the morning.

Hal. (quietly, turning away, and picking up his hat). I did n't know. You'd better go with the Duke. It'll be more fun any way. It's a tip-top morning, and the Duke's got a bran-new car. Go on, I don't mind. (He starts out).

Mrs. C. I thought you wanted me to go with you, Harry.

Hal. (turning at the door). I do,—I mean I did, but the Duke's got a bran-new car. I'll like along to school. I'm late now.

Mrs. C. But, Hal, I'd rather ride in a street car with you. (Louise smiles indulgently).

Mad. (laughing). You certainly *are* a sweet woman!

Mrs. C. I would. I'm not pretending just to please Hal.

Well. Ride in a street car, Aunt Kate? What nonsense! Come on. Hal does n't mind.

Mrs. C. (shaking her head). Oh, I know a street car's hopelessly commonplace, but I am tired of gilt edges. I'm tired of doing things that are n't worth while. Hal and I are going to do as we like for one whole long day. We're going to the toy shops, and wind up all the queer little jerky engines and the squeaky music boxes,—I haven't been in a toy shop for ever so long! And I'm going to buy a china dog with a muzzle on—a fierce little dog that growled so loud everybody was afraid of him! And Hal's going to get me a bunch of street violets, and maybe (*with a tremulous little laugh*) maybe we'll eat peanuts! We will if we want to, won't we, Boy? On the side streets, you know, so you won't be disgraced! I'm going to forget some of the things I have to remember on other days—the untrue things that the people we know call Life. I'm tired of gilt edges!

Hal. (the radiance flashing back to his face). Aunt Kate, I dare you to run away!

Mrs. C. (seizing his hand). Anybody that will take a dare will steal sheep! (*They run out, hand in hand. Wellington, Madeline and Louise look at each other in silence.*)

Louise. (fingering her new wrap idly). Did you ever? It's like an elopement!

Mad. (with a shrug). Hal does n't seem like the same boy.

Louise. He's lost his head about Aunt Kate. You know how much he cares for books.

Well. Well, go on, and get into some other togs. We'll take a spin, and have luncheon at Green's. I got tickets for "The Girl from Rector's" this afternoon.

Louise. Oh, that's great. And Madeline, we can stop at Wanamaker's and see that lovely lace I was telling you about. It's only twenty-five a yard.

Well. (pointing to the door). Hurry up! The day's getting on.

Mad. (*archly*). Give us five minutes?

Well. I'll give you five, but you may take thirty. (*The girls go, talking eagerly, both at once, and their light voices reach him in diminishing cadences. When their voices have died quite away, he takes off his heavy overcoat, tosses it on a chair, and sits down. He takes a cigarette case from his pocket, selects one, starts to light it, then puts it back and pockets the case. He takes up a book, opens it, then lays it on the table, thoughtfully. Then he says, sadly, looking into space with narrowed eyes*; "Tired of gilt edges!" A woman tired of gilt edges! "Tired of gilt edges!" Why, damn it, so am I, but you can't wash the gold off your fingers. It sticks! It sticks!

EPILOGUE

(The Dining-room of the Parker Home, Wednesday Morning, at 9 o'clock. Mr. and Mrs. Parker, Mrs. Colvin and Mr. Martin are breakfasting.)

Mr. P. (*from the head of the table*). Breakfast is a movable feast at this house. Wellington takes his at eight, Louise merges hers with luncheon at eleven, and Hal eats on the run. We old folks have to keep up the traditions. Pass the bread, please. By the way, where is Hal?

Mrs. P. Emma says he went out about eight o'clock. He told her he'd be back in time for breakfast.

Mr. P. (*making good headway with his breakfast*). Of course he will. He eats on the run, but he always eats.

Mr. M. He was cutting around his room long before seven o'clock. It sounded as if he were loading a furniture van—or unloading one. He must have something on his mind.

Mr. P. (*to Mrs. Colvin*). Have you told him yet?

Mrs. C. No, I'd rather you'd tell him.

Mrs. P. (wiping her eyes). Sydney, don't you dare tell him while I'm here. I can't stand it.

Mr. P. But I'll have to tell him before Kitty goes. (*Mr. Martin looks from one to the other, puzzled.*)

(*Enter WELLINGTON, hat in hand.*)

Well. (stepping up to Mrs. Colvin). Sorry not to breakfast with you, Aunt Kate, but my day begins at eight. Goodbye. I wish you were going to stay with us awhile. We need you around here, don't we, Dad?

Mrs. C. (rising). That's very nice of you, Wellington. Maybe next time I can stay longer.

Well. I hope so. Take good care of Hal, and come again sure.

Mrs. C. Good luck in your Wall Street war, dear boy.

Well. (going). Thank you. My regards to the suf-fragettes of Egypt. Goodbye.—Oh, Dad, I've ordered the car for you. So long, Aunt Kate! (*goes*).

Mrs. C. (resuming her breakfast). I'm glad he's so interested in his work.

Mr. M. His play, you mean. The Stock Exchange is the gayest playground in the world.

Mrs. C. And the saddest.

Mr. M. Oh, as to that, authorities differ.

(*Enter HAL, his cap on sideways, carrying some red roses.*)

"This little pig went to market."

Hal. (going directly to Mrs. Colvin). Right you are, Uncle Andy. I've been to market.—Aunt Kate, I bought you these roses because you're going away, and I wish you would n't.

Mrs. C. (rising to take the roses). Thank you, Hal. That was very thoughtful of you. How did you know that I like red roses best?

Hal. Oh, I know. I'm not so slow. You see you're kind of like a red rose yourself.

Mr. M. Bravo, young man! That was very neat for a sprout of your experience.

Mrs. P. Hal, do take off your cap, that's a good boy.

Hal. (*standing behind Mrs. Colvin's chair*). Aunt Mary, you've been crying. Did anybody hurt your feelings? Show me the man! (*brandishing his fists*). Show me the man! I'll pulverize him!

Mrs. P. (*rising hurriedly*). No, I—I have a headache. I—that is, I—I must get on my things. It must be nearly time to go. (*She hurries out, as if escaping from something.*)

Hal. (*looking after her*). She has n't a headache. Somebody has hurt her feelings. She'll tell me about it tomorrow. We always tell each other our troubles.

Mr. P. (*to Hal*). So you're sorry Aunt Kitty's going away.

Hal. You bet. Are n't you.

Mr. P. Yes, but I'd be sorrier if she were n't coming back.

Hal. (*stepping around so he can see Mrs. Colvin's face*). Are you coming back, Aunt Kate? (*Mr. Martin makes a pretense of going on with his breakfast, but his interest in the succeeding conversation is keen and intelligent.*)

Mrs. C. Yes, Prince Hal, I'm coming back to get you.

Hal. To get me?

Mrs. C. To get you.

Hal. (*slowly*). Coming back to Philadelphia to get—me? (*Mrs. Colvin nods three times, smilingly.*) Is it a riddle? Or a new sort of joke? Please don't joke about me.

Mr. P. (*rising from the table*). She is n't joking, Harry. I almost wish she were. She says she needs you more than we do, and she's coming back to get you in May, and you'll go to Europe with her.

Hal. She is? I am? (*shaking his head in a dazed fashion*). And this is n't to be my home any more?

Mr. P. (*gently*). Not any more, Harry. Hereafter you'll live with your Aunt Kitty.

Hal. (*slowly, steadily, feeling his blinded way*). I think I do not understand. Did Aunt Kate ask you for me, or did you—you ask her to take me?

Mr. P. Come here, Harry. (*Hal steps up to him, erect and proud*). Look at me. How can you ask me such a question? Aunt Kitty argued with me for two hours last night to get my consent, and it took us both to win your Aunt ~~Kate~~ over. Have n't I proved that I love you, my boy, in the last five years?

Hal. (*steadily*). Yes, but nobody has to take care of me. I—I can drive a milk wagon.

Mr. P. You must n't say things like that to me, Harry. It is n't fair. We love you; you know that. But Aunt Kitty says we have Louise and Wellington, and she needs you more than we do,—needs you to help carry out some of those wonderful plans of hers. And you love your Aunt Kitty, don't you?

Hal. (*steadily*). Yes, I love Aunt Kate all right.

Mr. P. (*trying to speak cheerfully*). Why, then, everything's lovely, and the goose honks high. And think where you'll go.—Paris, London, Egypt,—everywhere, and maybe come back in an airship!

Hal. (*breaking a little*). Yes, Uncle Syd, but I—I'm not good enough to live with Aunt Kate.

Mrs. C. (*holding her roses to her lips as she speaks*). Even supposing you are n't, Hal, perhaps you can improve.

Hal. (*extending his hand to Mr. Parker*). Uncle Syd, you have been good to me. I—I—

Mr. P. (*taking Hal's hand in both of his*). That's all right, my boy, that's all right. We—we hate to lose you, but I think—and Kitty thinks—that it will be best for you in the end. That is what we want to do,—what is best for you. We all hope—I mean that I—I—Excuse me, I forgot to 'phone Jenkins about that little matter. (*He goes out, hastily.*)

Hal. (*not moving*). And this is n't to be my home any more—not any more in all my life-time! —Uncle Syd has been very good to me, Aunt Kate.

Mrs. C. (*with the roses to her lips*). I am sure of that, Boy. And he will always be good to you.

Mr. M. (*furtively wiping his eyes on his napkin*). Have you had your breakfast, Kid?

Hal. (*turning his wide gaze on Mr. Martin*). Uncle Andy, did you know this?

Mr. M. (*nonchalantly, folding his napkin*). Did I know what? I know some things. A man of my years usually retains a few facts.

Hal. (*with a long, relaxing sigh*). Did you know I was going with Aunt Kate?

Mr. M. Not until this moment, but it is the best possible thing that could come to you. (*to Mrs. Colvin*). I congratulate you on your decision.

Mrs. C. Thank you, Uncle Andy. I hope I can make Harry happy and—useful.

Hal. (*sinking into a chair some distance from the table*). Something is always happening to me.

Mr. M. Come, Kid, eat your breakfast. We're all going to the station in a few minutes.

Hal. (*still in a state of amaze*). Something is always happening to me.

(*Enter LOUISE, in a quiet morning gown.*)

Louise. Good morning, everybody.—Aunt Kate, Madeline and I meant to breakfast with you, but we did n't waken up in time. She'll be down in a minute. (*She sits down at the table.*)

Hal. Louise, guess what's happened to me.

Louise. Something good?

Hal. The best ever.

Louise. (*eating her breakfast*). You passed in Latin.

Hal. (*scornfully*). Latin nothin'! It's bigger than that, I'm here to tell you.

Louise. I did n't know anything was bigger than passing in Latin.

Mr. M. (rising from the table). He has passed up Latin, rather. —Hal, come eat your breakfast. (*to Louise*). Are n't you going to the station with your Aunt.

Louise. Yes, but she does n't go until noon. There's oceans of time.

Mr. M. She's going at ten fifteen. You'd better look lively. (*to Mrs. Colvin*). Do make that young hopeful of yours eat some breakfast. The excitement has gone to his head. And hurry up, all of you. (*goes*).

Louise. (hurrying up). I did n't know you had changed your plans. —Hal, go tell Emma to call Madeleine.

Mrs. C. (rising from the table). No, there is n't time. You tell her goodbye for me. —Hal, let me pour you a cup of coffee?

Hal. I don't want any breakfast. May I tell Louise what's happened to me?

Mrs. C. (gathering up her roses). Look what Hal brought me. —You may if you'll eat your breakfast.

Hal. (springing up). I'll eat ten breakfasts! I'll eat a crocodile, as Hamlet says. (*He holds the portiere aside for Mrs. Colvin to pass out.*) Louise, I'm going to Europe with Aunt Kate.

Louise. Yes, you are! I have a pastel of your going to Europe!

Hal (hauling a chair up to the table). That's all right, I am. And I'm to live with Aunt Kate always. Uncle Syd just told me.

Louise. (leaning back in her chair). You are going to do what?

Hal. (standing up, reaching for things to eat). I'm going to help Aunt Kate build schools for—for those women in bondage, and hospitals and homes and things. She asked Uncle Syd last night if I could n't.

Louise. What do you mean,—if you mean anything?

Hal. I mean something this time, all right. Listen. Aunt Kate asked Uncle Syd if I could live with her—she needs a boy like me to help build those hospitals and things. And I'm going to Europe in May.

Louise. Really, Hal,—really?

Hal. Honor bright; hope to die. And Aunt Mary said no at first, and they made her say yes. They had an awful time to bring her around.

Louise. (*shaking her head with earnestness*). Are n't you going to live with us any more? Not any more—ever? (*Hal shakes his head with equal earnestness.*) What'll we do without you? What'll I do? There won't be any more fun in this house. Don't go, boy, don't go! What do you care about hospitals?

Hal. I got to go. Aunt Kate needs me.

Louise. I don't care how much she needs you. We need you, too. She has everything else; she can't have you! She can't have you! (*buries her face in her napkin*). I wish she had stayed away! I wish she had stayed away!

Hal. (*much discomfited by Louise's grief*). Maybe I'll amount to something if she takes me.

Louise. You could amount to something here, I guess! (*sobbing*). Oh, I wish she had stayed away! I wish she had stayed away!

Hal. (*watching her in great distress*). Please don't cry, Louise! Please don't!

Louise. I'll make Papa take it back! He'll do anything I ask him. She can't have you!

(*Enter EMMA.*)

Emma. Miss Louise, your mother says if you're going with them, come get ready.

Louise. (*rising*). Tell her I'm coming. (*Emma goes, wondering and sympathetic.*) I'll talk to Aunt Kate myself—you see if I don't! She has everything else in the world. She can't have you! (*She goes, half sobbing. Hal eats his breakfast soberly, with much heavy*

sighing and reaching for things. Presently, enter Emma, with the morning mail.)

Hal. Dolly Dimple, I'm going to Europe.

Emma. Yes you are!

Hal. (*folding his napkin very carefully*). I'm going with my Aunt Kate in May. I'm going to live with her always, I guess. She's adopted me.

Emma. (*dropping a few letters*). You're joking, are n't you?

Hal. No, it's straight goods. I'm to help her do things,—things that count, you know, and keep on counting after you're dead.

Emma. (*gravely*). What sort of things do you mean?

Hal. (*rising from the table*). I don't know yet—exactly, but Aunt Kate knows. She says she needs me in her business.

Emma. (*commencing to collect the dishes*). Won't you live here any more—not in all your life?

Hal. (*largely*). Oh, I shall probably be in America sometimes—off and on. (*He takes up his overcoat.*)

(*Enter MRS. COLVIN, carrying her traveling bag and the roses.*)

Mrs. C. Are you ready, Harry? We're all waiting.

Hal. (*struggling into his overcoat*). Aunt Kate, Dolly Dimple does n't believe it—that I'm going to Europe. You tell her.

Mrs. C. (*smiling*). Yes, Emma, he is going with me—he's to be my boy forever! (*She holds out her gloved hand to him, impulsively.*)

Hal. (*raising her hand to his lips, awkwardly enough*). My Aunt Kate!

CURTAIN.

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